



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Scholarships Support the Next Generation of Women Entrepreneurs in Senegal

In a large warehouse filled with boxes, baskets, buckets and huge tanks loaded with mangos, a dozen workers file in. They quickly remove their rings and bracelets as the production manager calls for work to begin.

On either side of a long table, the women move into position for assembly line work.

Soon, a steady stream of mangoes appears. First, there's an organic rinse for washing and cleaning, then sorting to select the best fruits. This step is followed by measurement and separation by size before the mangoes are weighed and stored in a cold room. The last step is loading all the mangoes into containers for export.

This isn't the type of workplace where you would typically expect to find student interns in the United States. But in Senegal, two young women from the Agricultural Technical High School of Bignona in southern Senegal are working toward technical certificates in Agricultural Operations Management by completing a three-month internship where they can apply their skills in food processing.

Ndeye Marième Sonko and Charlotte Odile Diédhiou are both benefiting from a Feed the Future program that partners with fruit and vegetable export company E3 Lothis Biosoleil, located about 20 miles outside of Dakar. Daby Sy, the company's director, was sponsored by Feed the Future to travel to the United States to study and work with agricultural training institutions. He says the trip showed him that internships tend to make students more ambitious, and that supporting students can create vocations among young graduates.

"Students understand that they can earn a living by applying the knowledge gained through their training, which is very important," he says. "We are now recruiting student interns in all our farms."

Like many developing countries, Senegal's agricultural labor force lacks sufficient vocational training, and this is especially true for women and other marginalized groups. That's why Feed the Future is supporting capacity building to help Senegal's youth gain the education and skills to create a thriving agriculture sector for future generations.

At E3 Lothis Biosoleil, student interns learn to maintain the quality, hygiene and safety standards of the firm's products from harvesting to packaging. They also support the traceability and logistics management system for shipments of various products.

"This internship is a valuable experience that allowed us to learn ways to enhance [the quality of] mango production," Diédhiou says. "It serves as a practical application of the theories we learn in school."

Her classmate, Sonko, plans to pursue a career as a food technician and take her skills back to the young women's home village of Casamance. She says she wants to devote herself to promoting local products, develop a product she can be proud of and share her experience with farmers in rural areas to create links between growers and processors.

Diédhiou and Sonko are also recipients of scholarships under Feed the Future to pursue educational programs in agriculture. The program has funded more than 160 motivated students in Senegal to earn degrees ranging from undergraduate all the way up to doctorate-level. Sixty percent of scholarship recipients are women.

"The scholarship is instrumental for our careers," Diédhiou says. "With it, we can really have ambitious plans. We can go anywhere in the country for quality education and discover the full potential of agricultural entrepreneurship in Senegal."

Diédhiou and Sonko have ambitious plans to build a fruit export business together in Casamance, and they also intend to start an organization that works with women in nearby villages. Their motivation and increased expertise in their field illustrate the possibilities to enhance Senegal's agriculture sector by teaming up with the private sector to create

opportunities for young people.